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Economic empowerment and satisfaction of Kerala women through responsible tourism entrepreneurship

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Abstract---Responsible tourism has received great attention in recent years due to its positive impacts and its capability to contribute towards women's empowerment. However, studies related to women empowerment and the outcome such as satisfaction are scant. This study aims to examine the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs involved in responsible tourism in Kerala. The study also tests the relationship between economic empowerment and satisfaction of women entrepreneurs. A quantitative method was employed and data was collected from 385 women entrepreneurs registered with Responsible Tourism Mission, Kerala, India. The study found that responsible tourism impacts in economic empowerment of women while having a weak positive relationship between the economic empowerment and their satisfaction.

Keywords--- economic empowerment, satisfaction, responsible tourism, Kerala, women entrepreneur.

Introduction

The presence of the female workforce in the tourism industry across the world is undeniable. Women's participation in tourism development is important and is recognised by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its various studies (Ferguson, 2007). According to WTTC (2019), travel and tourism industries, especially in developing countries, produce more employment and empowerment potential for women than other sectors. Tourism development may theoretically contribute to gender equality, and that women empowerment policies must be implemented to attain the development policy's goals (Ferguson, 2007).

Despite the fact that women account for 54 % of the tourism workforce, they earn 14.7 % less than their male counterparts and are underrepresented among tourism managers and ministers (UNWTO, 2019). According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's Sixth Economic Census, India, women account for almost 14 % of overall entrepreneurship in India, or 8.05 million out of a total of 58.5 million entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is viewed as a key driver of the tourism industry's growth (Mahmoud et al., 2019, 2020). Global Gender Gap Index by World Economic Forum validates that India has dropped to 112th place among 153 nations, down from 108th place in 2018 (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020).

As stated in the United Nation's Sustainable development goals (UNSDGs), taking measures to provide women with equal access to economic resources and ownership rights is a critical goal that can be realised only when women also attain empowerment (UNWTO, 2021). Empowerment, a well-established component of sustainable tourism development, is viewed as a multi-layered, interconnected phenomenon that operates at the individual, organisational, and community levels (Picard & Robinson, 2006). Empowerment is a "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives" by fostering power in people to operate the changes they may want "in their own lives, their communities, and in their society" (Kleba & Cruz, 2021, p. 33). Women entrepreneurs may be defined as "a woman or a group of women, who initiate, organise and operate a business enterprise" (Khatoon, 2015, p. 85). Researchers have urged for a long-term approach to tourism development which incorporates "empowerment" as a possible advantage to local community, in reaction to the negative repercussions of tourism (Edgell & McCormick, 2016).

Responsible tourism is all about making tourism more sustainable for all parties involved (Goodwin, 2011) and it is considered as one of the best approaches to achieve the United Nations' 2030 SDGs (Mondal & Samaddar, 2021). Especially SDG 5 ("achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") may be attained by using tourism as a tool for women's empowerment (McCall & Mearns, 2021). Meanwhile overall satisfaction is noticeably an essential indicator of progress for an individual entrepreneur. Satisfaction is commonly regarded as a business relationship's driving principle (Yeung et al., 2013). As a result, it is especially relevant to investigate the impacts on this critical performance metric (Cooper & Artz, 1995).

Kerala tourism strives to become a global tourism destination that capitalises on local resources and attracts investment, resulting in prolonged prosperity for the state's residents. Kerala's Responsible Tourism (RT) initiative generates a plethora of stories about empowerment and community engagement at grass root level. As a tool for sustainable tourism development, RT aims to integrate disadvantaged individuals into mainstream society by providing a sustainable income and addressing a variety of important social issues (Paul & Rupesh, 2013). The effective RT model and Kerala's institutional framework provide enormous prospects for the empowerment of the neglected people who struggle to fulfil both goals (Goodwin, 2016; Paul & Rupesh, 2013). The census (2011) indicates that more than 50% of the population (17.38 million) in Kerala are women. Therefore, programmes and initiatives must be developed in such a way that women to be

empowered and satisfied. RT initiatives can open up markets for products and services, which may stimulate local business growth and, as a result, poverty reduction (Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal, 2012) and contribute to satisfaction of women entrepreneurs. With quantitative scales developed only for the economic dimensions of empowerment, the review of theory and subsequent development of hypothesis will narrow to include discussion only about economic dimension and its relationship to satisfaction of responsible tourism entrepreneurs.

Literature review and hypothesis formulation

Responsible Tourism in Kerala

By 2008, an experimental RT Initiative had been initiated in Kerala (Kumar & Mathew, 2019). In the initial phase, four places were chosen: Kumarakom, Kovalam, Thekkady, and Vythiri. The second phase began in 2011, with the addition of three more destinations: Bekal, Kumbalanghi, and Ambalavayal (Paul & Rupesh, 2013) and since 2008, the initiative has been extended to entire state of Kerala as a tool for poverty alleviation, women empowerment, conservation of local and heritage art, craft, traditional livelihood activities, and local development by ensuring local community participation in tourism activities. Consequently, the state's Tourism Policy 2017 is also founded on RT principles in such a way that tourism department must mainstream RT activities by applying the RT concept to the entire spectrum of tourism activities and encouraging tourism service providers to embrace the RT principles in their operations (Andrews et al., 2013). The Responsible Tourism Mission (RTM) was established to monitor the state's RT operations (keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism). There are currently over 20000 registered units under the RT Mission.

Empowerment

Because of the magnitude of the empowerment concept, the study utilizes relevant tourism-related literature to construct and define empowerment in the context of women's entrepreneurship in Kerala's responsible tourism. The meaning of empowerment is debatable, and there is no widely agreed-upon definition (Andrews et al., 2013). However, Scheyvens popularised the notion of empowerment in tourist studies in 1999 by establishing a framework including economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment. Later, Ramos and Prideaux (2014) have included an environmental empowerment factor to emphasise a community's ability to conserve its natural resources. As a holistic approach, Azhakamani and Hunt (2017, p.343) defined empowerment in the context of tourism context as “ a multidimensional, context- dependent and dynamic process that provides humans, individually or collectively, with greater agency, freedom, and capacity to improve their quality of life as a function of engagement with the phenomenon of tourism” .

Economic empowerment is the term used to describe the long-term financial benefits that a destination community receives. Women achieve financial independence as a consequence of their financial flow of money, which aids them in forming relationships with other members of the community (Makombe, 2007). According to Gil Arroyo et al., (2019), Women are empowered by tourism by not

simply supplying them with economic possibilities but also allowing them to have management over the earnings created, allowing them to be self-sufficient and emphasising their role in sustaining their families.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction can be described as the most important indicator of the success of individual entrepreneurs (Ingalagi et al., 2021). Investigating entrepreneur work satisfaction is important as it is a vital metric of small and medium enterprise (SME) performance (Cooper & Artz, 1995), and it plays a role in all stages of the entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurial initiation, fluctuations during the entrepreneurial tenure, and the choice to quit entrepreneurship are all influenced by satisfaction (Lauto et al., 2020). It also describes various entrepreneurial attitudes and actions, such as readiness to take risks, desire to invest, willingness to adapt, and intention to continue with the enterprise. Women have been able to develop their personalities through entrepreneurship, with higher social skills and status, a better understanding of social issues and a better comprehension of government services (Nsengimana, 2017).

Empowerment and Satisfaction

According to Laschinger et al. (2004), workplace empowerment, has an influence on job satisfaction. Empowerment and work satisfaction have a favourable relationship (Hamed, 2010). Mushipe (2011) noted that employee participation and work satisfaction have a favourable association. Organizational empowerment has an influence on work satisfaction (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012). Abou Elnaga and Imran (2014) found that empowerment, may lead to work satisfaction. Omani women working in tourism can scarcely be regarded as dissatisfied with their jobs, even though some parts of the industry may be less satisfied than others (Afifi & Al-Sherif, 2014). In comparison to their counterparts in hospitality and travel agencies, who are clearly facing more social pressure as a result of working in tourism, female airline workers appear to be quite satisfied with their professions and less willing to resign because of the empowerment gained from the tourism industry. All of these attributes could be applied in the case of responsible tourism women's entrepreneurial satisfaction with empowerment.

There are commendable studies on women empowerment in tourism and hospitality industry and few studies attempted to connect satisfaction and women empowerment. However, there are no studies found on tourism entrepreneurship and women satisfaction. Furthermore, most of the studies are qualitative in nature. To obtain a generalised result of women entrepreneurs in Kerala, a quantitative study is essential. To fill this gap, the present study examines how women empowerment is related to entrepreneurial satisfaction with special reference to responsible tourism. Moreover, the study has the goal to bridge the gap through an inquiry that offers insights into how empowerment contributes to the development of their satisfaction. The study aims to explore the relationship of economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs on their satisfaction in the responsible tourism industry of Kerala, India. The study focused solely on women, eliminating the criticised prejudice in comparing men and women (Ahl, 2006; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Consequently, the following hypothesis formulated.

Hypothesis 1 (H1)- There is a significant relationship between economic empowerment and satisfaction of women entrepreneurs in responsible tourism.

Methodology

This study is based on a positivist paradigm and adopted a quantitative method using a structured questionnaire to gather data from women entrepreneurs from Kerala, India. The study setting consists of RT destinations in the state of Kerala, India. A Multistage sampling technique was employed to collect data where the study area was divided into three zones, North, South and Central. From these three zones, five districts ie. Kottayam, Eranakulam, Kozhikode, Wayanad and Kasaragod were chosen for study. From these districts, Nine RT destinations were chosen by drawing lots which include Kozhikode city, Naduthuruthi, Kumarakom, Kottayam city, Ernakulam , North Paravoor, Kalpetta, Vythiri and Bekal. The women entrepreneurs above 18 years, registered under RTM were considered as the sample frame of this study. The survey was conducted from October 2019 to February 2020. To evaluate the validity of the questionnaire, first, the dimensions and elements of each construct were identified from the literature, and in the next stage, content validity and expert's opinion through interviews with tourism experts and academicians were executed. A pilot study with 30 participants was performed to verify that questions in the survey questionnaire were accurately interpreted and after making subsequent required modifications, the questionnaire was finalised.

This research includes two main variables. Economic empowerment is considered as the independent variable and satisfaction is the dependent variable. The questionnaire was divided in to two sections. The first section elicited demographic information such as age, place of entrepreneurship and type of entrepreneurial activity. Second section contained nine items related to satisfaction and empowerment. The Economic Empowerment construct consisted of 6 items (ie. Boley et al., 2015; Boley & McGehee, 2014; Scheyvens, 1999) measured on a five-point Likert scale, where grade 1 denoted strong disagreement while grade 5 represented strong agreement. The satisfaction construct (ie.(Crosby et al., 1990; Joseph, 2021; Roberts et al., 2003) was also measured on a five-point Likert scale. The survey instrument was initially designed in English and subsequently translated into Malayalam for easier comprehension. Each participant in the study was given an overview of the investigation and obtained their informed consent.

A total of 415 respondents completed the survey questionnaire. However, only 385 responses (92%) were usable for the data analysis. Reliability of the two constructs (Economic Empowerment 0.878 and satisfaction construct is 0.926) were checked and found that both exceeds guideline value. SPSS (22.0) software was used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive mean, one-sample t-test and ANOVA were employed and to assess the impact of the independent variable (economic empowerment) on the dependent variable (satisfaction), correlation and regression analysis were used.

Data Analysis and Findings

Demographic Profile

As shown in Table 4.1, 80.8% of respondents were involved in rural entrepreneurship and 19.2 % belong to urban entrepreneurship. Analysis of age wise classification showed that the major chunk of 43.1 % of the respondents were in the age category of 146-59 and lowest 14.5% of the respondents were 18-29 age group.

Table 4.1
Demographic profile

		Frequency	Percent
Place of entrepreneurship	Rural	311	80.8
	Urban	74	19.2
	Total	385	100.0
Age	18-29	56	14.5
	30-45	104	27.0
	46-59	166	43.1
	60 or Above	59	15.3
	Total	385	100.0

Economic empowerment and satisfaction

Table 4.2
Descriptive Statistics of Economic empowerment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Through RT My income increased	385	3.79	.942
Through RT it is easy to access credit/loan	385	1.96	.989
Through RT improved my standard of living	385	3.77	.911
Through RT my savings increased	385	3.76	.899
Attains financial independence	385	3.68	.952
Through RT I could own assets and properties	385	2.65	1.102
Valid N (list wise)	385		

Hypothesis Testing -Economic Empowerment and Satisfaction Correlation between Economic empowerment and Stake holder satisfaction

To study whether the economic empowerment has any significant influence on satisfaction, correlation analysis is done. For which the hypothesis is framed as:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Economic empowerment and Stake holder satisfaction of women entrepreneurs

Correlation and regression are applied as both variables are continuous in nature. The result of correlation is presented in table 4.3

Table 4.3
Correlation between Economic empowerment and Stake holder satisfaction

	N	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation	P value
Satisfaction	385	12.84	3.246		
Economic empowerment	385	19.59	3.502	.296**	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Primary data

Table 4.3 shows that the mean and SD of economic empowerment and stake holder satisfaction. Here, Karl Pearson Correlation coefficient, r is .296 and it is statistically significant as the p value ($p < .000$) is lower than 0.05, hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between economic empowerment and satisfaction.

Regression Analysis of Satisfaction and economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs

Correlation means how closely two variables are correlated, but they implies nothing about the predictive power of variables. Hence, regression analysis is used to measure the strength of relationship and it says how much one variable is explained by the other variable. Model summary of regression is used to measure the relationship.

Table 4.4
Test Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.296 ^a	.088	.085	3.105

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic empowerment Source: Primary data

Table 4.4 shows R value (.296) explains that there is a low correlation (below .30) between variables. R square (.088) of regression model explains that 8.8% of Satisfaction affected by economic empowerment and the remaining 91.2% by any other variables. The adjusted R square provides more specific prediction after considering Standard Error is .085 explains 8.5% variance by economic empowerment. Regression shows the significance of explained portion (8.8%) and residual shows the significance of unexplained portion (91.2%) of *women entrepreneurs*. The significance of another variance is explained by ANOVA table. For which the research hypothesis was framed as:

H₀: There is no significant influence of economic empowerment on Satisfaction of women entrepreneurs.

Table 4.5
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	354.449	1	354.449	36.767	.000 ^b
	Residual	3692.242	383	9.640		
	Total	4046.691	384			

a. Dependent Variable: Stake-holder satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic empowerment

ANOVA table 4.5 shows the F value of 36.767 and p value .000 ($p < .000$), is less than .05, hence null hypothesis is rejected. These shows that the model is statistically significant. further indicates that the regression model can be used to study relationship between Economic empowerment and Satisfaction of women entrepreneurs.

Table 4.6
Coefficient of Regression Model for economic empowerment and Satisfaction of women entrepreneurs

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.463	.900		8.290	.000
	Economic empowerment	.274	.045	.296	6.064	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Stake-holder satisfaction

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Source: Primary data

Table 4.6 of coefficient of regression model shows T values with a significant value lower than 0.05 in both the Generations states that the model can predict the Dependent variable using the independent variable. The following equation represents the regression effect of economic empowerment on stake holder satisfaction.

$$\text{Satisfaction} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{EE}$$

$$\text{Satisfaction} = 7.463 + .274 \text{EE}$$

Where: β_0 = Constant, β_1 = Coefficient of the Independent Variable, EE = Economic empowerment

From the above equation it can be concluded that when economic empowerment influence by one unit, stake holder satisfaction affect by 0.274 units.

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs involved in responsible tourism on their work satisfaction in Kerala. The study indicated that there is a positive relationship between economic empowerment and satisfaction among women entrepreneurs which is in line with previous studies (Afifi and Al-Sherif, 2014) ; Senapati and Ojha, 2019). Even though the results show a positive relationship between the variables, the value is comparatively low that implies women's economic empowerment does not necessarily indicate that they are empowered holistically. Here it is to be noted that women's economic emancipation does not ensure their perception of their holistic empowerment (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). It is also critical to be conscious of the challenges to economic empowerment, and how tourism may exacerbate inequality.

In many cases, tourism income flows to a small number of persons and households concentrating in the hands of those with more authority, such as male entrepreneurs (Janis, 2014). As a result, individuals conducting tourism programmes with the goal of empowerment must address both class-based inequities and potential racial prejudice (Lapeyre, 2011). Furthermore, a lack of access to money, entrepreneurial training, and mentorships can make economic empowerment through tourism exceedingly challenging (Janis, 2014). There may be psychological factors which are increasingly significant in determining work satisfaction (Kong et al., 2018). Positive psychological elements such as trust, can enhance work satisfaction whereas negative psychological factors can lower it (Kong et al., 2018). Job satisfaction is adversely connected to role stress, burnout, emotional strain, and the psychological diversity atmosphere (Jung & Yoon, 2015; Lee & Hwang, 2016; Madera et al., 2016).

According to Farrelly and Quester (2005), satisfaction is crucial for ensuring the long-term validity of business channels. Satisfied members of business networks are less likely to terminate current business partnerships, less likely to sue business partners, and more likely to participate in collective activities (Mpinganjira et al., 2014; Svensson et al., 2010). Empowerment has a direct impact on work satisfaction and engagement (Dewettinck & Van Ameijde, 2011). Employees that appear unhappy or dissatisfied with their work will seek employment elsewhere (Ugwu et al., 2014). This occurs far more frequently than most employees would want to acknowledge (Alagarsamy et al., 2020). Employee's intentions to leave are significantly reduced when they appear empowered (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Having satisfied and empowered workforce is a blessing for an organization, and it will bring it prosperity and long-term success (Tohid Ardahaey & Nabiloo, 2012). If an employee is ineffective and unable to meet expectations in any job, he will lose interest and finally dragged out of the system. People who do a work uninterestedly and for financial gain are not empowered because they lack motivation, and hence may be unfair. As a result, if a company wants to flourish in a competitive market, it must prepare for, inspire, and empower its workforce (Tohid Ardahaey & Nabiloo, 2012).

The study finding shows that there is no significant difference between the age group and the place of entrepreneurship concerning satisfaction. The findings of

the study have implications for both practitioners and academicians because there is no measure to quantitatively evaluate perceptions of empowerment and satisfaction of women in responsible tourism. These findings serve as the foundation for future research that practitioners and academics involved in responsible tourism may embrace. Since the pandemic has highlighted the need for residents to be acknowledged as an essential stakeholder in tourism (Ramkissoon, 2020), particularly for women, this study can make a substantial contribution to responsible tourism sector planning/management in Kerala which is especially more relevant in post-COVID-19 context.

Limitations and Future Research

Even though the notion of responsible tourism is a generally established technique for sustainable destination management, there is very little empirical evidence to support its effects on the satisfaction of women entrepreneurs. Additional validation and extension of this framework in many other locations can strengthen this sustainable destination model. The study was conducted in the pre-COVID-19 context. The mixed methodology that combines the advantages of qualitative and quantitative methodologies can be done in future for better results.

Conclusion

To mitigate the negative impacts on society or destinations due to tourism development, responsible tourism development is needed to be practised widely through the involvement of women. This work tested the linkages between satisfaction and economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in responsible tourism. Even though the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between economic empowerment and satisfaction, the strength of the relationship is comparatively low. To improve employee work satisfaction, policy makers, managers and concerned authorities may create a vibrant business culture and implement effective supportive activities to women entrepreneurs.

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